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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY,

*IN ANN ARBOR, MICH.,*

ON

Fore - Fathers Day,

DECEMBER 22, 1860,

BY

REV. AZARIAH ELDRIDGE,

*OF DETROIT.*

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CORRESPONDENCE.

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ANN ARBOR, Dec. 31, 1860.

REV. A. ELDRIDGE,

DEAR SIR :—A number of our citizens are desirous of circulating the very eloquent Address which you delivered at the late anniversary of the New England Society. I therefore take this opportunity of requesting a copy for publication,

Yours Respectfully,

J. L. TAPPAN, *Cor. Sec'y.*

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MR. J. L. TAPPAN,

DEAR SIR :—Your kind note of a recent date in respect to my Pilgrim Address at Ann Arbor has been duly received ; and enclosed herewith you will find a copy of the same.

Yours, very truly,

AZARIAH ELDRIDGE.

January 2nd, 1861.

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## PILGRIM ADDRESS.

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MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

IT IS pleasant and profitable to look upon the past; and among by-gone experiences, no event is more important and interesting than the commencement of individual, or national existence. Our present stature, as a united people; the wonderful run of success and development, by which we have grown to this greatness and power, help to render that small and forlorn beginning, on the bleak shore of New England, which we are now here to celebrate, peculiarly significant and attractive. Our minds and hearts are drawn to it, on the seasonable recurrence of these filial and patriotic festivities, as to a point where providence was planting and causing to germinate, among rocks and sterility, a mighty plan to change the face of this Western Continent, and turn the destinies of the whole World. There was no parade, pomp, nor circumstance about it; and there seldom is, where great events are coming to pass. The nation was born, in those colonial scenes, as it were, in a manger; and with as little demonstration as when an acorn, pressed into the earth by a heedless tread among the trees, begins to take root; or a rivulet, turned by some obstruction, trickles at a new point from the hillside.

But a singular interest, especially for those in the true line of descent, attaches to those remarkable men, and to their more remarkable work. Every incident, from the day they left Holland, or rather England, to the time the colony was recognized as a success, has a charm for us which is ever new. Who, that has Puritan blood in him, but loves to think and feel how calmly they endured reproach; how nobly, gave up the comforts of home; how steadily, passed through the perils of the sea; how bravely, took hold of and mastered the difficulties of their new position, and the problem they had undertaken to solve?

What an address was that, from the learned and saintly Robinson, to which they listened, on casting off from the old world! Was there ever such an occasion! Ever such a body of men and women assembled! Ever such words of wisdom and courage spoken by uninspired man! In vain I search the pages of history and literature for the like. So tender, and yet firm; so solemn, and cheering; so well fitted to make heroes of the hearers, and martyrs, if need should be. How thoughtful and timely, that remarkable passage, to liberate the more rigid from undue bondage to dogma and the letter, wherein he said, so much in advance of his age, "And, if God reveal anything to you, by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive anything by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded that the Lord has more truth yet to break out of his holy word."

But at length they were ready, and upon the eve of final departure. Having finished their preliminary sojourn in Holland, and made preparation to sail, the *Speedwell* had started and returned, and her crew been some of them transferred to the *May Flower*, when, on the 6th of September, this vessel of one hundred and eighty tons burthen finally set sail from Drecht-Haven alone. The days had already begun to shorten; autumnal storms, to visit the Atlantic; and the voyage, proved a tempestuous one. In the wrenching of the ship one day, a strong timber threatened to break, "but a great iron screw was found," and the ship saved. While they were at sea one man died, whose name was William Button; and one child was born, to Mrs. Hopkins, which they named *Oceanus*. So that the number of one hundred and two, with which they put forth, was preserved until they came to land.

On the 11th of November they cast anchor, within the sheltering arm of Cape Cod, which seemed to come down from the rocky interior of New England, and extend itself far into the sea, to meet them and encircle them within its embrace. They were aiming to go farther south, and find the Hudson, if possible, but were caught and detained by this out-reaching arm of the old Bay State. Within what is now Provincetown harbor, they found themselves enclosed from the winds and waves of the Atlantic, in one of the finest roadsteads known to the sons of the Ocean. This was on Saturday afternoon. Sixty-seven weary days had they passed in the ship.—On Sunday they rested, and on Monday, the 13th, they sent ashore sixteen men armed with musket, sword and corslet, and headed by Miles



Standish. Very sandy, they found it, and sterile. Few signs of life were discovered until the fourth day, when they saw five or six Indians, with a dog; who ran away swiftly, and whistled the dog after them. This whistling of the dog, one historian thinks, must have done something towards assuring the wanderers. They sent parties along the shore, and into the woods, to explore. At length, on a plain, they came to what looked like a grave and "musing what it might be," they resolved to examine, and found, under some mats, a bag, with a bow by it; and not far off, a smaller bag, with a little bow. In the first, there was a quantity of fine red powder, together with the skull and bones of a man; in the second, more of the powder, with the skull and bones of a child. Here then, was an Indian grave. In another, which was subsequently opened, there was a quantity of corn, in a little old basket; and on digging further, they came to a fine large basket, full of fair corn, with thirty-six goodly ears at the top, which two of them could scarcely lift, but which they added to the common stock, promising, "so soon as we could meet any of the inhabitants of that place, to make them large satisfaction."

So they spent a week or two, while their boat was repairing, and during that time, being compelled to wade much to and from the ship, some of them caught the "original of their death." Then, having ascertained that the point where they were was not the one at which to establish themselves permanently, Carver, Bradford, Winslow, Standish, and ten more started forth with the boat, on an exploring trip, along the shore. They followed the coast round on the inside of Cape Cod, for some seventy miles. It was very cold; the sea broke over them repeatedly; the water froze to their garments and "made them many times like coats of iron." At a certain point one of their party, who had gone up from the shore, soon ran back, crying, "Indians," and was followed by a flight of arrows. But Standish was ready; and returning the fire, which checked the savages, they again put to sea. Then a storm came on, with snow and hail; the mast was carried away by the wind; and they knew not which way to turn; but at length, gained the land, and found it to be an island Clark's Island—secure from Indians. That was Saturday, again, and there they resolved to spend the Sabbath, which was their first one ashore, and they had such service as the circumstances would permit, with only

A screen of leafless branches  
Between them and the blast.

On Monday, the 11th, old style, the 22d, as we reckon it, of December, they sounded the harbor, near the mouth of which they found themselves, and finding it good, they went over to a rock, on the shore of the main land, and stepping upon it from their boat, marched up from the water's edge. There were corn-fields before them. That rock was Plymouth Rock! That Monday is what we now know and celebrate as Fore-Fathers Day!

The rest of their company were sent for, and came to them, with the ship. Soon the sound of axes, and saws, and hammers was heard. Their blows were heavy, their hearts were earnest, and their hands strong. The arrangement was for each man to build his own house. These were planted near together, in two parallel rows, for purposes of defence. So they toiled on, during the winter, without interruption from the natives. The latter were hostile, owing to the kidnapping enterprise of a slave trader named Hunt, but had been mostly swept away from the neighborhood of Plymouth, by a pestilence. Their ordinary labors were relieved, occasionally, by expeditions for hunting and fishing.

I find on record the trying experience of two Pilgrims, who lost themselves while hunting, with a great female mastiff, and wandered about all night, "They heard in the night, as they thought, two lions roaring exceedingly for a long time together, and a third that they thought very near them. Not knowing what to do, they resolved to climb up in a tree, as their safest refuge, though that would prove an intolerably cold lodging; so they stood at the tree's root, that when the lions came they might take their opportunity of climbing up. The bitch they were fain to hold by the neck, for she would have been gone to the lion; but it pleased God so to dispose that the wild beasts came not, so they walked up and down under the tree all night; it was an exceedingly cold night."

But those trials and perils, alas! were not many of them imaginary. When Spring came, death had been busy among them. The wife of Bradford was drowned in Province-town harbor; and, of the remaining one hundred and one, six died in December; eight, in January; seventeen, in February; and thirteen, in March. The women suffered most, as might be expected, but there was no murmuring or complaint. Miles Standish, the warrior, was seen passing from house to house, an angel of tenderness and mercy. Quietly they suffered and died, as in a holy cause; and the living suppressed their tears and sighs. The dead, they buried in the hillside, near the rock, and smoothed the

graves away, and sowed them over with grass, that the Indians might not infer, by counting them, the weakness of the colony, which kept at work as before. The summit of the ascent was graded, and a fortification begun there. It soon bristled with cannon, and beneath the platform which supported these, was the room in which they worshiped God on Sunday, marching to it armed, and leaving their weapons stacked at the entrance.

But at length Spring came, as I have said, after the long winter ; and it is on record how sweetly the singing of the birds sounded in their ears. There was also a pleasanter sound still came to some of them, one day in the middle of March, in the fine English word, " Welcome, Welcome," kindly, though imperfectly, uttered by a savage, who suddenly stood before them. It was Samoset. He told them of Hunt and the pestilence. In a few days he returned, with more savages, including Squanto, who had been one of those slaves and escaped. And so intercourse with the natives began.

With fine weather, the time for planting arrived, and also, for the departure of the May Flower. This was a trying separation. The good ship, lying in the harbor, visited from time to time, was a comforting feature of the scene, and seemed like a link of connection, if not a dernier means of escape, between them and the Father land. When that vessel was gone, the wide ocean would be before them, a continent of wild beasts and savages behind them, yet not one of them thought to return in her. Not a man, woman, or child, of those who had come to remain, went back to England in the May Flower. Her work was done in bringing them out. They had come to remain and establish themselves, and were not the people to abandon an enterprise once undertaken. And yet the prospect was far from promising, to an ordinary set of men, engaged in an ordinary expedition. The London Merchants, who had put in a small venture, were very much disheartened, but not so the Pilgrim Fathers themselves. They were not discouraged, when their first crop proved a short one. They did not think of being so, when the summer of the second year proved unpropitious ; nor when the ship Fortune came, bringing more men and no provisions ; nor even when an Indian messenger appeared among them, and, dropping a bundle of arrows tied up in a rattle-snake's skin, fled swiftly out of their village. It was a declaration of war, from Canonicut the chief of five thousand Narraganset warriors. But Miles Standish took up the skin, filled it with powder and ball, and caused it to be sent back. And they calmly

waited the result. Not so calmly either, for hearing that Squanto, their man Friday, had been killed by a Narraganset Chief, ten men armed themselves, plunged into the forest, and surrounded the Chief's cabin; when they found that Squanto was not dead, and so they came back. This, while they knew of the massacre at Jamestown, of four hundred whites in a single hour. But they were different men from those Virginia colonists, and went on prospering and victorious in spite of everything.

At length, as time passed, they gave up the common stock principle. Bradford who had succeeded Carver, at his death, as Governor of the Colony, expressly says that it did not work well. Each man began to set up for himself, and they only paid in enough to support the officers and fishermen. After that, a new and larger division of land took place, of twenty acres to the man. Then also, a division of the live stock, except some belonging to the town, according to the children and families of each; and cattle, in those days, were used, not only for purposes of draught, but ridden as beasts of burden. We are told, for example, that "when John Alden went to Cape Cod to marry Priscilla Mullens, he covered his bull with broad-cloth and rode upon his back:" and that "when he returned he placed his wife there, and led the bull home by the ring in his nose." He first went, you remember, according to the story which Longfellow has helped to render immortal, to plead for Priscilla, in behalf of his friend Miles Standish, and being referred by her father, whom he first approached according to custom, if not to law—for they soon had a law, that any young man who did not do that, before he made advances to the girl herself, should be fined, or suffer corporal punishment—being referred to Priscilla, by her respected parent, Mr. Mullens, Alden argued so heartily for his friend Standish, and had so pleasing a person and so handsome a face, that, fixing her eyes on him, and then on the ground, she said, "Prythee, John, why do you not speak for yourself?" Upon that hint he spoke, probably considering the old gentleman's permission covered this new aspect of the case, and so took her home as aforesaid; which entire performance, Standish finally forgave him, in the version given by the poet, but for my own part, I very much doubt if he ever did.

But years rolled on, another colony sprang up, at the north of them, under Roger Conant, the patriarch of Dorchester, and ancestor of our good old judge at Detroit, and whose cordial reception of John Endicott, sent out from England to succeed him, caused them to name

the place near Boston where it occurred Salem. Then the New Haven colony began, in the year 1638, under Davenport and Pruden. And, about the same time, the Connecticut colony, with John Hooker and others at the head of it. Each one of these colonies came to adopt very much the same government for itself. Neither of them made any definite reference to any superior authority in England. In all four the freemen were the sole fountain of power. And who should be admitted to exercise the right of suffrage was decided, in the Massachusetts and New Haven colonies, by the male members of the church; and in Plymouth and Connecticut colonies, by all the freemen in mass meeting.

At length, in Massachusetts, after justice had been administered for years, without any system of Statutes, or any recognition of the common law of England, but according to the principles of manifest equity, and to the law of God, which they would use, they said, until they had time to make better, a "body of liberties," so called, was prepared by Mr. Nathaniel Ward, and adopted in General Court. It consists of one hundred fundamental laws, and is a most wonderful production, to come from any one man of any age. Among the remarkable things about it, is its definition of treason, which is silent respecting all allegiance, on the part of the people, except to Massachusetts, and is so drawn as to threaten with death all who should take even the King's part against her. That was in 1631, when they had only been going alone about twenty years. How far back the spirit of independence dates in that State you can see. In Connecticut they adopted, the next year; almost a copy of the same instrument, being then, perhaps some four thousand persons strong. And when Cromwell came to power, while these colonists admired him, they carefully abstained from acknowledging his authority; and when England made him Protector, they preserved a steady silence; and when he died, the event is not so much as referred to in their public records. Yet Cromwell always liked and valued them. He allowed the navigation laws, which pressed hard upon the Southern Colonies, to become a dead letter, as against them. They received the commodities of all nations free of duty, and sent their ships at will to the ports of continental Europe. And when he had conquered Ireland, and began to consider how to keep it in subjection and in order, he bethought him of these Puritans in New England, then some thirty thousand in number, and straightway sent over most liberal propositions, if they would be removed in a body to Ireland. But they declined, in a most peculiar letter, which John Endicott wrote, for

the General Court, promising not to hinder any persons, or families, from going to any part of the world where God called them; but on the whole, while very much obliged to him, they did not think they cared to change their abode.

The Protector seems to have taken their pious and polite rebuff in good part, yet not to have abandoned his idea of bringing their remarkable qualities into play, for the furtherance of his mighty enterprises. When the Island of Jamaica was reduced by his fleet, and found to contain too small a number of white inhabitants,—only about fifteen hundred,—he thought of these Puritans again, and conceived the idea of giving it them, to possess and defend. Daniel Larkin, a colonist then in London, was sent back with a document proposing liberal things, as to land rent, privilege, duties, &c; only he, Cromwell, to name their Governor, and Commander of forces. What did they do with the communication? Waited eight months before it was read, and considered, by the General Court. Then a letter was ordered “to his Highness from this Court;” which it took five months to draw up; but which was very short, wordy and devotional; thanking him, again, for his offer, and promising never to cease praying for His Highness, that the Lord would long continue him to carry on his work, overthrow the enemies of his truth, and to enlarge the kingdom of his dear Son. Here that matter ended, and with it I shall conclude my enumeration of incidents illustrative of the character of our Forefathers.

Take them, for all in all, we shall not look upon their like again.

John Robinson, who is to be reckoned their leader, although like Moses, he never reached the promised land, would be a rare man in any age, or country; learned, wise, polished and modest; and of such scholarly tastes and acquirements, that the chief preachers of Leyden, chose him to defend their doctrines, at the University, against the Arminians, led on by the celebrated Episcopius, whom he is thought to have thoroughly defeated.

William Brewster was a gentleman by birth, educated as a scholar at Cambridge, had lived in early life,—for he was older than most of the Pilgrims,—at the Court of Queen Elizabeth, and was the confidential friend and assistant of the renowned Davidson, when the latter was her Secretary of State.

John Carver was well educated, and possessed of a good estate, which he spent in the cause, and died shortly after being chosen first Governor of the Colony.

William Bradford, his successor, was also a man of property and mark; the master of several languages, German, French, Latin and Greek, and especially the Hebrew. He was familiar with literature and with general history. He had a large library for the time; was no mean poet, when he chose to exercise his gifts in that direction, and few names come down to us associated with more of the distinctive attributes of a noble soul.

Edward Winslow was a man of good family and education. Had traveled over Europe, moved among the gentlemen of the British Parliament, and on revisiting England, was commissioned to superintend the English fleet at the West Indies.

These things, I mention to show, that those stern Forefathers of ours were not mere men of bone and muscle, on the one hand, nor wild, hot-headed fanatics on the other; but well bred, intelligent, conscientious persons, who had been accustomed to a different experience, and were making great sacrifices in what they did.

Such was the work, the beginning of which we celebrate. These are some of the attending circumstances. These are the men, sifted from three Kingdoms, and bolted again by the return of the Speedwell, who planted themselves and their new idea, two hundred and forty years ago, on the edge of a then howling wilderness.

But why, after all, do their names stand so high upon the pillar of human renown? Is it solely the justice of mankind to the sterling virtues they cherished, and the heavy sacrifices they made, for freedom to worship God? Why so faithfully honored and applauded, the part they took, when so much good and true service has been forgotten? Because of its relation to providence. That was the turning point. There the current changed in favor of civil and ecclesiastical liberty. That was the scene, and they, the chosen instruments, for inaugurating a new era in religious and governmental affairs. There freedom of conscience began. There constitutional government first had a being in the annals of time. That compact framed and signed with forty one names, in the cabin of the May Flower, riding at anchor, by which they bound themselves before going on shore to be governed by each other as a body politic, and not the document penned by Thomas Jefferson, was the first Declaration of Independence. That "body of liberties" drawn up by Mr. Ward, and not the Constitution of the United States, was our earliest attempt, and the first one among mankind, at constitutional self government. Those deliberate answers, suggesting to Oliver Cromwell himself, the

idea of hands off, as to selecting Governors and Generals, and not the casting of taxed tea into Boston harbor, was the first indication in America of resistance to Royal authority and will. What did it mean, when they declined to go to Ireland, and declined to go to Jamaica? That they were free, and designed to remain so! The spirit of freedom was already in them! There the thing commenced! There the tree of liberty began to grow. Its roots are entwined about the bones of the Pilgrim Fathers in the old Bay State. With them it was, at the start, a religious sentiment. They sought freedom to worship God, which they knew belonged to them, and, in achieving it, freed themselves from civil domination, both in feeling, and for the time, in fact. So it was ordered to be. The great Disposer permitted and encouraged this result. Every providential advantage needful, and preventive necessary, to give their enterprise the right direction, and make it an advance in human history, was wonderfully supplied. The hand of the Lord was in it. This could only be done, the true character and quality imparted to the whole movement, and its consequences in this land and to the world only be secured, by such forefathers as they were. Therefore, he raised them up and sent them. Therefore he kept them as they were, true to themselves, by preserving them from admixture, and guarding them from contamination. Cromwell had a purpose, and would have sent them where they soon had been spoiled. The Lord had a higher purpose, and kept them there, and what he wished them to be, by the bracing quality of the climate, by the barrenness of the soil which he cleared of natives and guided them to, and by the rigor of those habits which expelled the worthless and troublesome, and repelled gay and fashionable adventurers. When the London Merchants, desirous of large returns for the little money invested, sent men to change all this to overrule these Fathers of a strong, orderly and well-educated Christian nation, and transform the colony into a company of enterprising, fur-traders; how quickly was the plan set aside, in the good providence of God, and did things go on as before in the way preordained for them!

It is from this view of the case, wherein the mind of God concerning these friends and their early work comes to light, that we may derive assurance of hope for the country. Too much interest has been betrayed from the first, too many blessings have all along been invested in this national enterprise, by Him who sees the end from the beginning, for it to be abandoned now! The position we occupy,



on the surface of the earth, with heathen Africa on one side, and heathen China and India on the other, has been too wisely selected ; the incipient stages of our existence, as a people, too carefully watched over ; the strides of progress, too rapid and regular, for nothing to come of it ! God does not so work. I feel in regard to the ruin of this country, as I do when they tell of the second advent of Christ, and the destruction of the world, that it is too early yet. The world was four thousand years in preparing for him, and the gospel has been presented as yet to only one eighth of the people. So this country has just begun to be what it has so long been preparing for. It is now just beginning to enter on the high career, which He has marked out for it far—far into the future ; and it is altogether too early to talk of dissolution and decay. Do nations die in mid-career, as a man is smitten down in middle life ? Do nations come apart, and when the dew of youth is still upon them ? Never. Will he who has blessed and favored no other one, since the birth of time, so lavishly, now suffer this nation to come to any serious harm, by a junto of selfish men, scheming for a confederacy in which South Carolina may be the banner State, and Charleston the great Metropolis ? Never. Never. They can't make me believe it, by their threatening, but harmless, ordinances. They can't make me believe it, by their crocodile tears and sighs, or proposals from whatever quarter, to humble ourselves before God, with fasting and prayer that He may prevent such a calamity. He has no idea of bringing it upon us, or of suffering it to be done. There is no occasion to fear any such thing, but abundant occasion for thanksgiving and praise, that He has bestowed upon us such blessings, together with the power to retain them that He is granting us such rewards of industry, and such returns from the soil, as the world has never seen ; that there has been no time, since the Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock, when we were any thing like so strong as now, as against foreign aggression, or the elements of internal trouble. But let us not abuse our power. Let us not think to tyrannize over any portion of our fellow countrymen, and interfere with their peculiar institutions. Let us bear and forbear, as the worthy sons of calm, firm, clear headed, strong willed, conscientious sires, in whom a Cromwell at the head of England found his match. And when we do pray, as all often should, upon this subject ; let it be that the God of our Fathers, may still be the God of their children, to the latest generation ; and that He may lead us and them into the adoption of all private virtues and public measures which will lift the country higher and higher as a model of successful and glorious Republicanism.



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